

Federal

The earliest period style one will commonly encounter in most of Kentucky is the Federal Style (circa 1790-1825). The Federal style is characterized by elegance: thin straight lines, flat plains, narrow moldings (see Figure 25 and Figure 26). It tends to progress more toward these qualities over the period of its popularity. Early examples have wider moldings and window muntins, for example, but they narrow over the years. Early houses in this style often have exposed ceiling joists inside, while later examples have plaster ceilings. Baseboards are usually short, four-six inches high, with a beaded top edge. Window and door surrounds have beaded interior edges framed by a flat board and terminating in a narrow ogee molding. Principal rooms often have chair rail and elaborate, delicately styled mantles (Figure 25).



Figure 25: WS 27, Benjamin Pile House, early 19th century, Maud vicinity. Interior, showing mantle, closet, and stair doors. Late Federal style with some Greek Revival elements. Maud vicinity. See also Figure 27.

Surviving examples of Federal style buildings in the region tend to be of masonry or log - in part because framing was less widespread in the region. At its most elaborate, the Federal style can be

very ornate and complex, particularly for details such as mantles and hearth walls. Overall, however, it shows a tendency toward restraint. The Federal style, like the Greek Revival style that follows, is inspired by classical architectural precedents. Even so, the two styles differ a great deal in their feeling and sensibility. Many houses have mixed elements of both, and the two are often difficult to sort out - particularly in a house that has been altered in the period.



Figure 26: *WS 2, Gregory/Barlow House, early 19th century, Mooresville vicinity.*

The Gregory/Barlow house (WS 2, Figure 26), a previously surveyed house revisited in this project, is a modest but substantial brick example of the style. Notable features of this early nineteenth-century hall-parlor plan house include the center front door with transom windows above, and the corbelled brick cornice crowning the Flemish bond façade (for a discussion of the hall-parlor plan, see page 118). The porch is a later alteration. Near Bradfordsville, the house at site MN 919 (Figure 28) began as very similar form to WS 2. Probably a hall-parlor plan as well, the original main block of the house consisted of a two story section where the central three openings are located. Like WS 2, the front door was the center of the three openings; the door location is seen in the altered brickwork around the window where the door once was (Figure 29). In the Greek Revival period, 1830s-1840s, the house at MN 919 was expanded with a two-bay, two story section to the right, and a three bay single story service wing to the left of the main block of the house. The front door opening was converted to accommodate the window,

and a new entrance cut through the window opening to the right of that to center the door on the façade of the enlarged two-story section. The porch and a second story opening to the porch balcony were also added at this time. Even in this later period, the exterior of MN 919 remained more or less Federal in appearance, but the new interior spaces are more Greek Revival in appearance.



Figure 27: *WS 27, Benjamin Pile House, Maud vicinity.*



Figure 28: *MN 919, a Federal/Greek Revival House, second quarter nineteenth century, Bradfordsville vicinity. See also Figure 29.*

WS 27 (Figure 25 and Figure 27) is largely Federal in its styling. It is a good example of a standard large house of the period, a center-hall plan house, one room deep, also known as an I-house (see Figure 156). The alterations of WS 2 we discussed transformed it into a house of this same type, although there the service wing is attached to the side rather than stretching behind. WS 27 is really something of a transitional house with some of the trim inside being Greek Revival in style (Figure 38). MN 46, the Coppage House is an excellent example of the Federal style around 1825-30. It is also transitional with some elements of Greek Revival (Figure 161). It's a regionally unusual example of a side passage plan (Figure 160). The use of the plan here might be a link to the Maryland origins of so many of Marion and Washington County's early inhabitants.



Figure 29: MN 919: detail of window to left of front door with brick infill scar indicating the opening was once a doorway.

Although only eight houses in the Federal style were newly documented in this survey, some buildings principally of other styles (or even with no readily identifiable style) may nonetheless

have some Federal details. At MN 336, for example, (Figure 30 and Figure 31) a house classified as mid-19th century romantic and Gothic, we find elements of Federal style in details such as the balusters of the staircase (Figure 30). Here, even though the house principally reflects later styles, some of the original materials still reflect the older Federal style. In this case it suggests that the house might have an older core with later historic alterations. A Federal detail that is often found in houses of the period, even ones with few other style markers, is a narrow bead molding marking the edges of base boards, inside edges of window and door openings, exposed structural elements such as ceiling joists, and the edges of boards aligned together vertically in batten doors or partition walls. The recognition of details such as this helps us to understand the history of a building. In the case of MN 336, it gives us a clue that the house might be older than it first appears to be, which needs further investigation for confirmation. A different case is found at WS 316. There, the stair door there has beaded edges on four of its boards, and then another board, the one on the left in the photograph, has no bead (Figure 32). The unbeaded board is clearly a later extension of the original door width: longer battens are scabbed on to accommodate the extra board, and the original battens remain in place. The door appears to be a narrow, late Federal door, salvaged in the later nineteenth century for use in this house. Salvage and reuse of architectural materials was a common practice in the construction of houses, and can sometimes confuse our attempts to date them. Knowledge of period styles and technologies is important in helping us to “read” old houses in this way to discover how they were built and how they have been altered over generations.



Figure 30: MN 336, “Old Loretto Farm” House, mid-nineteenth century, Loretto, stair detail. Stylistic details in this house have elements of Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, and Italianate styles. See also Figure 31.



Figure 31: MN 336, exterior. The survey forms codes its stylistic influences as mid 19th century Romantic and Gothic Revival, but the exterior also shows influences of Queen Anne and Shingle style, due to a series of alteration and renovation. See also Figure 30.



Figure 32: *WS 316, Slack's Cabin, mid-late nineteenth century, near Fredericktown: interior detail showing corner stair and door. The door is a historic example of architectural material that has been salvaged and reused. See Figure 129 for exterior view.*

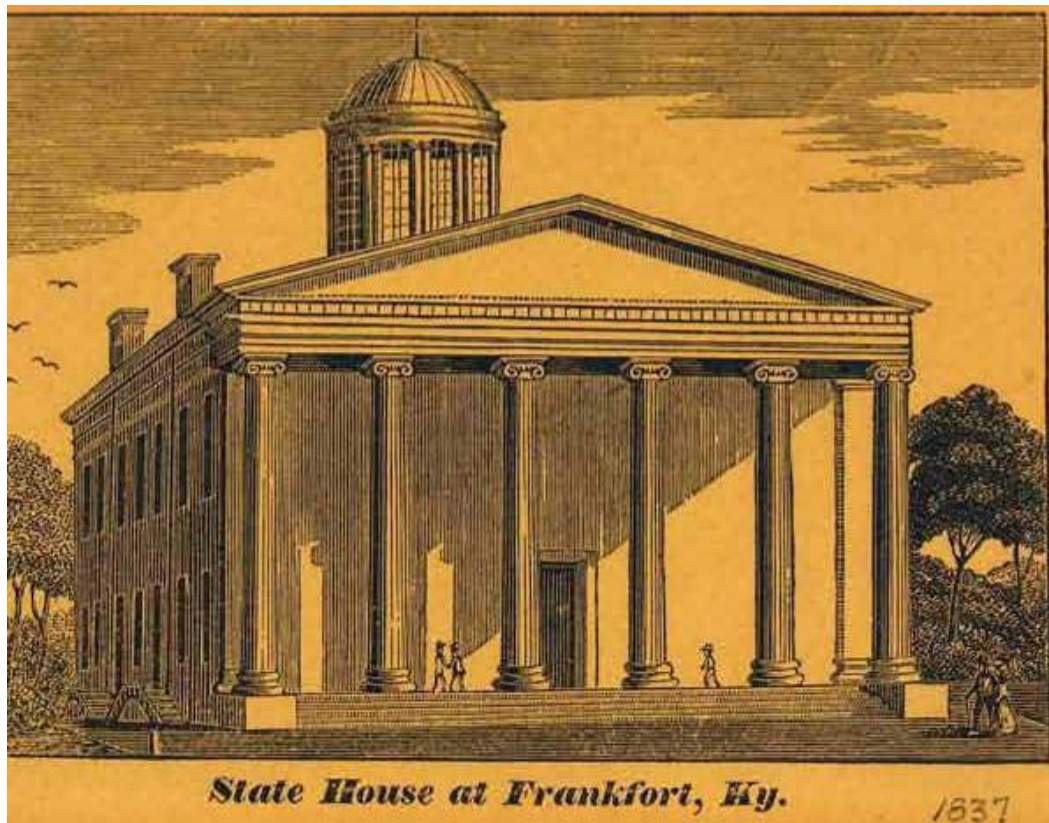


Figure 33: FR-FO 33, Old Capitol, Frankfort, in an 1837 engraving (Kentucky Historical Society: Martin F. Schmidt Collection of Kentucky Views, 2004.41).

Greek Revival

The Greek Revival Style is the earliest style to have a strong association with professional American Architects such as Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the architect of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., who also designed the Pope Villa in Lexington, KY (1812-13), Asher Benjamin, and Gideon Shryock, the architect of the masterful Greek Revival Old State Capitol in Frankfort (1830, Figure 33). There, we see the hallmarks of the style, such as the use of columns in particular. The Greek Revival style, as the name clearly implies, was an homage to ancient classical style exemplified by Greek temples such as the Parthenon. In Kentucky, some large and pretentious houses were built with gable fronts in massive temple form in full Greek revival splendor, such as Ward Hall near Georgetown. However, in most houses the traditional forms remained unchanged while the details changed to Greek revival style. The biggest change in house form tends to be an increased number of two-story front porches, with tall classical-order columns accenting the centered doorway. This is just grafted on to the standard center passage house. We see this at WS 152, which is a log house (Figure 35), and at WS 24 (Figure 158).

Many older houses were updated in the Greek Revival period through the addition of such porches. The Washington County Courthouse (Figure 34), a Federal style public building, was updated in the Greek revival period with the addition of a cupola. The porches there that look like they may be Greek Revival style came in the early 20th century Colonial Revival period.



Figure 34: *WS-S 2, Washington County Courthouse, 1816, Springfield. The cupola was added circa 1840. The Doric porches are a product of a 1918 renovation. National Register Photograph, Jack Bobbitt, KHC, 1974.*

In contrast to the delicate, refined Federal style, the Greek is comparatively heavy, bold, and often restrained in detail. Interior architectural trim, in particular, undergoes changes. Moldings are thicker; door trim is wide and flat. Doors are now more likely to have a pair of tall, flat panels (WS 27, Figure 38) than the six panel Federal period doors with conspicuous bevels. Windows similarly get fewer, larger panes. Baseboard moldings get taller, and chair rail goes out of fashion to the point where it is often ripped out in period redecorating. In mantles, the delicate side columns of the Federal style are replaced by massive, flat pilasters with ordered capitols (WS 153, Figure 36). Door and window surrounds now often have short returns or peaked lintels (MN 683, Figure 46).



Figure 35: *WS 153, Goode House, second quarter nineteenth century, Texas vicinity. See also Figure 36.*

Seventeen newly surveyed structures in the RHDI survey area were classified as Greek Revival, bringing the total to 68, but that doesn't reflect the larger impact of the style on the region's architecture. The mantle and door surrounds at MN 683 (Figure 46 and Figure 47), for example, are very much Greek Revival in style, but are contained within a house classified as Gothic Revival (Figure 45). As late as the 1880s, as we have seen, the style is still often found in the

region's rural churches, as at MN 231, Smock's Methodist Chapel (Figure 24), where the gable front roof with partial returns on the cornice reflects the style.

Federal detailing persists in the Greek Revival period. It might be credited to builders with long careers and older tools, or to their clients' preference for established styles. At WS 27 (Figure 38) for example, we see the persistence of chair rail, a popular Federal feature typically abandoned in the Greek Revival period. Houses built earlier in the Greek Revival period are more likely to retain some Federal details. Houses late in the era, say 1860s-80s, are more likely to be mash-ups with newer styles such as Italianate, as at MN-1, the Bradford House (Figure 39- Figure 40), or Gothic, as at MN 683 (Figure 45- Figure 46). The same process of mixing in new styles with existing ones continues on to the present day.



Figure 36: *WS 153, Mantle. See also Figure 35.*



Figure 37: *WS 24, Mayes house, circa 1830-50, Springfield vicinity: detail of Interior Door Lintel. See also Figure 158.*



Figure 38: *WS 27, detail of Doors and Trim in Front Hall. See also Figure 25 and Figure 27.*



Figure 39: MN 1, Bradford Place, second quarter nineteenth century, Bradfordsville Vicinity. Now badly deteriorated, the Bradford house has elements of Greek Revival and Italianate styles. See also Figure 40.



Figure 40: MN 1, Bradford Place, detail of Second Story Porch Entry. See also Figure 39.